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ON THE ANCIENT HISTORY AND THE ANTIQUITIES OF IRELAND.

BY THE REV. EDWARD JOHNSTON, M.C.R.I.A. &c.

The early history of Ireland, so far as we can attain to it, seems little else than a history of the abuse of liberty. The law of the strongest reigned paramount—

The simple plan
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.*

Hence the annals of Irish sovereignty, even on the shewing of the most zealous partizans, present, for the most part, a record of unbridled ambition and of reckless crime.† Of fifty-three monarchs who succeeded to the throne after the christian religion was introduced, but seventeen escaped a violent death, either by assassination or in battle, while of one hundred and thirty-six kings who are reckoned up previously to the introduction of christianity, only the same number of seventeen, or one in eight, are recorded to have died a natural death. A pentarchical form of government appears to have existed at a very early period in Ireland. Besides the four provincial kings, there was a chief monarch, who held his court at Tara in Meath. He seems to have been raised above the subordinate princes in rank and consideration merely, rather than as their acknowledged ruler, vested with authority to bend them to his will. The chief tie he possessed over the minor toparchs, was the possession of hostages, demanded as a security for the tribute and the military services they were bound to afford. A failure in the performance of these obligations, was also a frequent cause of internal war, in which the monarch often wasted the territory of the offending toparch, slaughtered its inhabitants, and carried off their moveable property as a legitimate booty: nor was he always successful. A single province, that of Leinster, defied for several successive centuries, the whole power of the acknowledged kings of Ireland, who sought to levy a tribute on the refractory inhabitants, as an eruec or fine, for the murder of certain princesses, with their retinue, perpetrated in the third century, by Dunlang their prince.

According to the native annals, the battle of Ocha, (county of Meath,) fought A.D. 483, put an end to the regal succession in the provincial kings. The family of Niall the Great then became so powerful as to exclude provincial princes for nearly six hundred years. Still, however, the sovereignty, though limited to the one blood, was elective among the members of that family. This partially elective form, was in itself eminently calculated to produce and to perpetuate civil and domestic dissension. The flames of discord, kindled by the claims of rival aspirants to the crown, were not unfrequently quenched in the blood of the less powerful, and therefore, unsuccessful candidate: nor was the power of the elected king sufficiently stable and energetic to

* So Horace in his brief account of the origin of society—
"Viribus editor cædebat, ut in grege taurus."

† The panegyrics of the Irish bards were frequently little better than avowed incentives to wrong and robbery. Such maxims as "valour is justice," and "priority of title confers no unalienable right upon the imbecility of age," were openly gloried in by them. "O'Conn! chief of O'Neills, stored is thy dwelling with plundered beef," commences the welcome with which a chief is hailed on his return from a predatory excursion.

effect the salutary purposes of government, even were that power, by any good fortune, guided by a wise and vigorous hand. The whole frame of society was unhinged by the continual struggles, not only of candidates for the throne, but also of the chieftains or petty princes against each other, as well as against the chief monarch. The aid of these puisne princes seems to have been withheld at their own will, even in the case of foreign invasion. The language of Tacitus, speaking of the Roman invasion of Britain, would strictly apply to the Irish, when overrun by the Danes. Fighting among themselves, each thought the conquest of every other, though accomplished by their common enemy, an advantage not an injury, and while they resisted separately, all were overcome.

In such a government, if it deserve the name, the people were not recognised as possessing any distinct rights. By the compilers of the native annals they seem to have been thought scarcely deserving of even a passing regard. Without a voice in the election of the monarch, possessing no influence in the appointment of the inferior toparchs, destitute of any controul over the grants of property that might be made to the church, or to inferior chiefs, they were in fact little else than a weapon in the hands of the kings or the nobles, to be wielded indifferently, for evil or for good. There was no law to protect them; their property, their liberty, and their lives, were consequently at the disposal of such chiefs as had the power and the will to molest them. Hence, they were accustomed to rely for safety, not on the justice of their cause, or the iniquity of their oppressor, but on the patronage and protection of the chief under whose banner they fought. At a time when their own power rested solely on the physical force they could bring into the field, the respective princes were not slow to avenge the wrongs of their dependants, without inquiring too curiously into the justice of the cause, provided their own passions or rapacity were not enlisted on the side of the alleged intruder. The common people of Ireland thus acquired a disposition, which almost universally pervades them to this day, and strongly influences their language and their conduct. This is their strong reluctance to regard the law as their friend and guardian, and their desire to shelter themselves under the power and good-will of their landlord or superior, rather than to confide in the justice of their cause and the protection of the established institutions of their country. The absence of real freedom during the middle ages, was not, however, peculiar to Ireland. Indeed from the time that Rome ceased to be free, till Venice purchased deliverance from feudal thralldom with the riches she acquired by the commerce which sprang from the crusades—a dreary interval of nearly twelve hundred years—rational liberty can scarcely be said to have existed in the world.

It is good for us sometimes to pause in the career of life, with its hurry of affairs, and look back upon the injuries, the oppressions, and the small share of justice, security, or comfort, which fell to the lot of mankind in past ages. It teaches us to appreciate more sensibly the happiness we ourselves enjoy, in living at a period, and in a country, where every man can dwell in peace and safety, under the certain shelter of his unmolested home. Such reflections seem to be naturally called forth too, and peculiarly well fitted for the times in which we live, when mankind appear at length to have discovered that the real end of living together in society, and submitting to the restraints and limitations of natural liberty consequent thereupon, is to promote the com-

fort and advantage of each other, and to increase the general sum of human happiness, the advancement and diffusion of which throughout the lowest and the largest class, seems fast becoming the real, as it has always been the professed object, of our own and most other European governments.

Gross darkness brooded over all Europe at the period under consideration; but the customs, common and peculiar to the "Irishry," of tanistry and gavelkind, of fostering and gossiprede, of accepting an amercement for murder, together with the establishment of sanctuaries for criminals of every description, contributed still further to the disorder which universally prevailed. By tanistry, as by the nuncupative testament of Alexander, the inheritance devolved to the strongest; and, as might have been expected, we find Campion recording that "this custome breedeth among them continual warres and treasons." The erue for murder has been much declaimed against by many who seem not to be aware that it was in use among the anglo-Saxons. In Athelstane's laws there is a chapter—"De diversis occisorum sanguinis pretiis," in which the *weregilds* for homicide are particularly detailed, and are adjusted according to the rank of the person slain.*

It is to be observed, moreover, that a very different and a much more favourable account is given by the popular historians of Ireland, of its government at the period now under discussion. It may not be uninteresting to the reader to learn the nature of this account, and therefore, no apology perhaps is necessary for introducing here a brief summary of the ancient Irish constitution, as abridged from the most able and dispassionate of these writers.

'All power emanated from the people; every officer, from the village chief to the ardhriah, or head president, was elected by the public voice; and they followed to the field a general, or sailed on distant expeditions under an admiral, chosen expressly by themselves.

'The supreme authority was committed to an ardhriah, or president, who resided, for the purpose of more immediate communication with the distant parts, in the centre of the kingdom. For the support of his dignity he was allotted a district, now known by the name of Meath; and the remainder of the kingdom was divided into four provinces, subsequently designated Leinster, Ulster, Munster, and Connaught. Over each of these a riah, or provincial chief, presided, subject to the authority of the president. Each province was subdivided into counties, the number of which was indefinite; they were governed by an aireach, or subordinate chief. Every county was again subdivided into districts, over each presided a flaith, or general; each district was portioned into tribe lands, and over each tribe was placed a ceanfinny, or central chief, and the tribe lands, were distributed into village lands, which, for the benefit of the rath, was committed to the forgu, or village ruler. To preserve the utmost subordination, and strengthen every part, without weakening the privileges of any, especial care was taken to place the various rulers within the immediate controul of their superiors. The ardhriah was encircled by the riahs; the riahs by the aireachs; the aireachs by the flaiths; the flaiths by the ceanfinnys; and, lastly, the ceanfinnys by the forgu.

'The chiefs were rather the servants than the masters of the people. Exalted sentiments were the result of conscious power; and the frequency of public meetings begot habits of thinking and acting favour-

* See Mr. D'Alton's Essay.

able to the permanency of civil rights. The domestic affairs of each tribe were regulated by the tribesmen themselves. In some conspicuous part of their grounds a mound of earth, called a mote, arose: here they assembled when public business required their presence, or when individuals, or the community sought redress from the laws. In cases of litigation a judge, denominated a brehone, presided, for the purpose of preserving order and explaining the rules of proceeding. The merits of the case were left entirely to the people themselves, or such of them as formed the jury; and an eminence for assembling on was chosen, that the tribesmen might be instantly apprised that consultations were about to be held, interesting to them as integral parts of the social compact.*

‘The brehone was required to possess a competent knowledge of the law and constitution; he owed his situation to his learning and the free voice of the people, and the amount of his fees was established by national enactments.

‘When districts disagreed, or laws for a country were to be repealed, modified, or enacted, the people, represented by their chiefs, assembled round the aireach, or county governor: and when matters of still greater importance demanded public attention, the riah, or ruler of a province, met the representatives of the people, and, if necessary, the people themselves, in the centre of upright pillars of stone. On such occasions the rude court of equity and legislation was amplified: the single upright block of granite was encompassed by many circles constructed of a similar material; within the first may have stood the aireachs, next them the flaiths, and, beyond them, the ceanfinnys, the forgas, and the multitude.’

‘The mode of election, whether the object was to provide an ardriah, or a forgu, a chief, or a village ruler, was extremely simple. On the death of the supreme governor, the provincial rulers assembled at the house of the bruigh, or public inn; having remained for some time in earnest consultation, they came forth, and submitted their choice to the people assembled, for the purpose of hearing their report. If they disapproved, the riahs once more retired, and made another selection: but, if they approved, the ardriah was instantly proclaimed, amidst tumultuous cheers, and the beating of swords and shields. The sovereign ruler was then placed on a stone dedicated to religious purposes, and, with a javelin in his hand, swore, by the different elements, to act in accordance with the laws and customs of the country, and to promote, by every legitimate means, whether at war or in peace, the happiness of the people.

‘The riahs were, in a similar manner, nominated by the aireachs, and elected by the people; and the aireachs themselves, owed their

* Spencer describes the Brehon code to have been “a rule of right unwritten, but delivered by tradition from one to another, in which oftentimes there appeareth great shew of equity in determining the right between party and party:”—So far the resemblance to our common law is complete, the concluding clause of the description, is however of a different complexion; “but in many things repugnant, both to God’s laws and man’s.” Campion writes of the Brehon judges, “other lawyers they have, liable to certain families, which after the custom of the country, determine and judge causes. These consider of wrongs offered and received among their neighbours, be it murder, or felony, or trespass, all is redeemed by composition (except the grudge of parties seek revenge) and the time they have to spare from spoyling and praining, they lightly bestow in parleying about such matters. The Breighoon, so they term this kind of lawyer, sitteth him down on a bank, the lords and gentlemen at variance round about him, and then they proceed.”

elevation to the flaiths, or district governors, and the clan. The flaiths in their turn, were chosen by the ceanfinnys in conjunction with the people, and the ceanfinnys themselves were appointed by village chiefs and the tribe. The mode of proceeding admitted of no variation, however unequal in importance the occasion. To provide as far as possible against the evils which might arise from the operations of design and ambition, it was agreed that certain offices in the state were accessible only to the members of certain families. From these, however limited or numerous, the people had to chose their chiefs; a ceanfinny could not be a flaith, nor an aireach a riah.

‘As every chief was necessarily a warrior, provision was made against those evils which might result either from his occasional absence or sudden death. Those in the higher stations of riah or ardriah had their successors, called tanists, appointed during their life time; and while this practice obviated, in a great measure, the confusion and disorder consequent upon popular elections, it effectually prevented the chief from pursuing views of family ambition. The ceremonial of investiture, in the case of the tanist, was preliminary; and his subsequent accession seems to have depended entirely on his popularity, for the history of Ireland furnishes numerous instances in which the tanist has been rejected on the death of the chief. It does not appear that any public duties devolved upon him during the life time of the principal, in consequence of his station, or that any lands were appropriated expressly for supporting the dignity of his office.

‘Before entering on distant or dangerous expeditions the riah, or provincial chief, summoned an assembly of the people; their voice decided upon its expediency, and as many as chose to engage in it selected a leader, on condition that each was to have an equitable proportion of the booty. In general their choice fell upon the riah, but this was far from being uniformly the case. The ardriah, when the war was national, also resorted to a popular council; and hostilities once commenced, the whole kingdom had to contribute to its support. He communicated the resolution of the people to the riah, the riah again to the aireach, and the aireach to the officers below him in the regular scale of descent, until it reached the forgu, or principal of a rath.’

It must be confessed that it is not easy to suppress a smile on perusing this grave and circumstantial narrative of constitutional authority and exactness. Yet after all, it may not differ, possibly, very much farther from the reality of things, than that beautiful romance in Blackstone’s Commentaries which we are accustomed to read to our children, as a true history of the now existing constitution of Great Britain.

There were among the ancient Irish, several orders of serfs, whose condition was little, if at all, raised above that of common slaves. Captives in war, indeed, were manumitted at a stipulated ransom; but native villeins or boors, called betagii, were considered as part of the live stock of the land, and were transmitted, together with the cattle, to every successive owner of the estate;* nor were they permitted to live within the rath, or enclosure, where the freemen dwelt; but in

* The form of conveyance of land and stock was “cum villanis et vaccis et bladis;” and in a grant to the church by Dermotus king of Leinster, occur these words:—“Donavi terram quandam quæ dicitur Ballidubgait, cum hominibus suis, scilicet, Milisu Mac Feilecan, cum filiis et nepotibus suis, liberis et absolutis a pro-curatione et expeditione meâ in perpetuam eleemosynam,” &c.

boodies or temporary sheds erected outside the bounds. In the black book of Lismore, there is a memorandum that every *team* of these *betagii* should in each year prepare one acre of land for wheat, one for oats, and likewise draw home their master's crops.* At first it is probable that they were principally employed to assist in herding the cattle, to prevent them from straying into the morasses and unenclosed wilds, or becoming the spoil of predatory septs in their nomadic excursions: they were also sometimes occupied in catching fish.—One man was estimated at the value of three women, or eight sheep. They were not allowed to serve regularly in war; this was the duty and the privilege of the free tenants and farmers, whose services, however, like those of the *betagii* before-mentioned, were liable to be transferred with the estate to every new possessor.† Their tenure of the land, if any, was for their own lives; most commonly they held it at the pleasure of their lords. Their property consisted chiefly of cattle; and in military service they were required to support themselves, which they probably effected more by plunder than by any proper resources of their own. They were likewise required to furnish an annual rent of cattle to their lords, and to entertain them and their followers occasionally on hunting excursions, a species of forced benevolence more vexatious and oppressive to the feudatory than productive to the exacting party.

In such a state of things, it is evident that the population could never become numerous. The absence of commerce, and the rudeness of agriculture‡ consequent upon poverty, slavery, and personal insecurity, scarcely required the aid of the continual predatory wars,§ famines, and pestilences recorded in the annals, to check the progress of population. In fact, when it is considered how large a proportion of the people were withdrawn from productive occupation, as public

* Mem. qd. quælibet caruc' de betag' quolt an' debet arare d'no l'a' ad seisin' frumti, et l'a' ad seisin' avenar': item trahere blada d'ni.

† "Una cum servitiis libere tenentium, firmariorum et betagiorum," is part of the form of a royal grant of the manor of Kildare, so late as A. D. 1316.

‡ Heylyn cosmog. p. 291. speaking of the "uncivil kernes of Ireland," observes, "All of them are so tenacious of their ancient customs, that neither power, nor reason, nor the sense of the inconveniences which they suffer by it, can wean them to desert or change them. A pregnant evidence whereof is their use of ploughing, not with such gears or harness as in other places, but by tying the hindmost horses' head to the tail of the former, which makes the poor jades draw in a great deal of pain, renders them unserviceable by soon losing of their tails, and withall is a course of so slow a despatch, that they cannot break up as much ground in a week, as a good team, well harnessed, would perform in a day; yet no persuasion hath been able to prevail upon them for the changing of this hurtful and ridiculous custom. And when the Earl of Stafford, the late lord deputy, had damned it by act of parliament, and laid a penalty on such as should after use it, the people thought it such a grievance, and so injurious to the nation, that among other things demanded towards a pacification of the present troubles, their agents and commissioners insisted eagerly on the abrogation of this law." There are many of the Irish farmers even now, and those not the least intelligent, who maintain that a good way of breaking in a young horse for draught, is to make him plough, or at least harrow, for a day or two, fastened by the tail.

§ In allusion to the constant and bloody dissensions which always prevailed, we find the annals of the four masters, after recording fearful lightnings and thunder, like the signs of the last dreadful day of judgment, which appalled all the people collected at a certain great fair in the year 767, thus proceed with the chronicle: "Timor et tremor populos Hiberniæ exinde invasit, ita ut eorum sapientes eos adhortarent ad jejunia facienda cum orationibus sinceris et frequentibus, et unam solam comestionem pacem mutuam stabilire, abeque nodosis difficultatibus et stabilitate veram."

robbers attending on their leaders in predatory warfare, as bards, stochachs, squires, kerns, gallow-glasses, horse-boys, and others, fruges consumere nati; and when the unskilfulness of those who were profitably employed, as well as the casualties of every kind to which their productions were liable, are taken into account, it seems somewhat surprising how those who survived the chances of battle, murder, and pestilence, found wherewithal to still the cravings of hunger. So great, indeed, was the difficulty of procuring subsistence, that the people were allowed to destroy their offspring when they found it impossible to provide them with food. It is believed that female children, in particular, were often left to perish by their parents; and occurrences still more revolting to human nature are more than hinted at.* It is certain also, that the slaves, like the Helots of the Spartans, were murdered when superabundant.

This gloomy narrative may at first, perhaps, appear strangely at variance with that knowledge and advancement in the arts of civilized life which were claimed for Ireland in the out-set of this paper. It is to be remembered, however, that at the unhappy period of which we speak, Britain itself, indeed all Europe, was plunged in darkness, and that though useful knowledge and liberal attainments existed, they were no where universally or even generally diffused. Notwithstanding the admitted purity of the faith introduced into Ireland, and the piety of many of its professors, learning and wisdom were still shut up in cloisters; but such cloisters, containing an instructed clergy, did exist in Ireland ere they were known in Britain. Armagh is believed to have been erected into the principal see of all Ireland by saint Patric, so early as the year 455. To the clergy, however, learning was strictly confined; laymen, even of the highest rank, not only neglected, but despised the pursuit of literature. Of the liberality of the Irish ecclesiastics, who afforded food, instruction and the use of books, to such foreigners as repaired to them for improvement, too much boast has probably been made. In such a state of society as has been described, hospitality and assistance to peaceful strangers, is like ordinary civility in more refined ages, a common and obvious duty of life, rather than a virtue deserving to be warmly extolled. By far the greater number of the ecclesiastics were what is called regulars, that is, monks living in monasteries under certain rules to which they vowed obedience. In general the clergy appear to have been treated, previously to the invasions of the Danes, with a greater degree of respect and consideration than could have been expected amid the lawless turbulence which prevailed.

* Scarcity, famine, and pestilence, are indicated with a melancholy frequency in the native annals. The Ulster Chronicle records a failure of corn Annis 535 and 538. Extraordinary mortalities from disease are mentioned in 544, 548, and 553. Cannibalism from famine in 699. *Fames et pestilentia tribus annis in Hibernia facta est, ut ho' hom (homo hominem,) comederet.* The eighth century is marked by fatalities to cattle from inclemency of weather, in addition to the calamities of famine and disease common to it with the sixth and seventh centuries. The ninth and tenth centuries were equally afflicted with great pestilences, oft repeated, which struck down men and cattle; and in the latter, (*Anno 964,*) raged a great and terrible famine—"ita ut pater venderet in servitutem filium et filiam, pro victu." This is also one of the many testimonies to prove a traffic in slaves in Ireland. In the eleventh century is recounted an universal epidemic; also, a murrain, which slew much cattle, and beasts of the forest. Early in the twelfth century these annals terminate, but not before relating the loss of corn and cattle by stress of weather; and in 1116, a general famine and pestilence throughout the land. All this time wars and devastations continually occur.

Their friendly interference often prevented or terminated the quarrels of opposing chieftains; though it not unfrequently proved ineffectual, and then they had the mortification to see the solemn compacts which had been ratified by the oaths of the contending parties, impiously broken when opportunity offered. But their sanctuaries were not violated—their libraries were not pillaged, and violence was rarely offered to their persons. In the seventh century, especially, Ireland was conspicuous, amid the darkness which elsewhere covered the earth, for its numerous lights of piety and learning. S. Jonas describes the Irish of the seventh century as strong in christian faith above the neighbouring nations, though destitute of the ordinary laws of civilized states.* It is probably to this period that dean Prideaux refers, when he styles Ireland the prime seat of learning to all christendom.† It was in the year 664 that the well known conference was held, concerning the time of celebrating Easter, and other questions of church discipline in which the independence of the church of Ireland on the ecclesiastical authority of the bishop of Rome is distinctly maintained and acted upon. Benedict, abbot of Aniam in Languedoc, a writer of the eighth century, states that scholastic divinity, or philosophic reasoning on theology, was introduced by the Irish among the literati of Europe.

Scholastic divinity was, however, little known in England for several centuries after, and it had then degenerated in a great degree into subtle and frivolous distinctions about nonsense. Late in the ninth century, (A.D. 871.) we find Alfred complaining that at his accession there were very few south of the Humber, and not one south of the Thames, who could translate a single sentence of latin into english. Alcuin, pupil of archbishop Egbert, and himself the instructor of Charlemagne, in a letter to Offa king of Mercia, speaks of "his native country of Northumberland," as a land "whose churches are demolished or desecrated by the pagans, its monasteries defiled with adulteries, and the land wet with the blood of its nobles and princes." In the eighth century, however, many murders of ecclesiastics occur even in Ireland, and from the ninth to the twelfth, the Ostmen, frequently aided by native princes, plundered the monasteries without scruple, desecrated their altars, violated their subterraneous crypts, burned their books and other literary monuments, and massacred many of the monks themselves.‡ The lamp of learning was thus well-nigh extinguished, except perhaps in the northern county of Armagh, where despite of robbery, slaughter, and conflagration, it still continued to emit some faint and flickering rays. During the greater part of this disastrous period ecclesiastical offices became "by devilish ambition"§ hereditary in certain powerful families, and religion almost totally disappeared. Within the last few years of the eighth century, commenced those fatal incursions of the Danes, and other northern freebooters, the details of which form, for three successive ages, the history of Ireland and its misery. A century before, Bede relates that Ecgrifridus, king of the Nerdan Humbrians, having despatched an army into Ireland

* "Gens quamquam absque reliquarum gentium legibus tamen in christiani vigoris dogmate florens, omnium vicinarum gentium fidem præpollet."

† Connections, Vol. 3. ‡ Ulster Annals passim.

§ S. Bernard Vit. Malach. writes "Verum mos pessimus inoleverat, quorundam diabolicâ ambitione potentum, sedem sanctam obtentum iri hereditariâ successionem. Nec enim patiebantur episcopari, nisi qui essent de tribu et familiâ suâ. Thus these worthies seem to have been bent upon realising Fletcher of Saltoun's bitter jest of a hereditary professor of divinity, and to have deemed the altar not less fitted than the throne for inheritance by descent.

under the command of Bertus his general, miserably desolated that innocent kingdom, always most friendly to the English nation; inso-much that he spared not even churches and monasteries in his hostile ravages. The death of this prince, in another warlike expedition the year following, is described as a just retribution for his impiety in refusing to listen to the exhortations of the most reverend father Egbert, who had dissuaded him from prosecuting his enterprise against the innocent Irish. The venerable historian seems to forget that, after all, the North-of-Englanders were but retaliating the past devastations of the Irish, committed on themselves.

The incursions of the Danes at first resembled rather the robberies of pirates than the invasions of a national enemy. Any leader who could collect a handful of desperate adventurers, fitted out a few vessels, and landing on the island, threw up some temporary strong hold, to which, as to a fortress, they drove and carried all the cattle or other valuables they found within their reach, and when the neighbourhood was devastated they hastened away with their plunder. Gradually their numbers increased, their expeditions were extended, and their stay prolonged. From the commencement to the middle of the ninth century, we have an unbroken succession of monasteries burnt, abbots murdered, property plundered, and women dishonoured or carried off. Early in this century the native Irish princes are said to have applied to Charlemagne for assistance against these ravages, and to have had their application most courteously received, though no record remains of actual co-operation in their defence. In 812, however, a defeat of the Normans, with great slaughter, by the Irish, and the repulse of their fleet to their native shores is recorded.*

In 815 occurred the first invasion of the terrible Turgesius. The Danes, hitherto scattered over the island in detached parties, each pursuing its own isolated interests, now flocked to the standard of this wolfish chief of the North. All conspired in one unholy league for the general ruin of a devoted land. Internal dissention, domestic sedition, seems never to have been wanting from the time of Agricola to that of Turgesius, to aggravate the evils and aid the foes of Ireland.* In many cases native princes are known to have joined the foreign against their private enemies. The annals of Ulster record an universal devastation of the island at this period, while other authorities specify the destruction of Mayo and Iniscattery by fire and sword in 816, and of Cork in 820. Armagh was wasted, and its shrines plundered and desecrated in 832. In 836 two Norman fleets arrived. The atrocities of these new invaders are represented as exceeding even those of the Danes; and the latter, unwilling to share the spoil of the country with this additional swarm of adventurers, seconded the wretched natives in their efforts to destroy this new nest of hornets, and ultimately succeeded in repelling them; but no sooner were they banished, than the Danes renewed their ravages. At length, however, about the middle of the ninth century, the death of the far-famed Turgesius took place,* the struggles of the natives were, in many places, crowned with success, and the Danes were signally defeated in various quarters

* *Rer. Hib. scrip. vet. tom. 4.*

† *Conf. D'Alton's Essay, and Johnston's Lodbrokar Quida, passim.*

* Turgesius was conquered A. D. 848, by Maelseachlin or Malachy, king of Ireland, and drowned in Lochvair near Mullingar. There is a foolish romance about the causes which led to the capture of the Danish chief, told by most modern chroniclers, but not by the ancient, with which, therefore, it would be impertinent to trouble the reader.

of the island at once. They were now generally expelled, for a time : but expulsion was a matter of small moment to a people who fled to their ships only for safety, and to their native homes for succour. They soon returned with reinforcements, and continued their course of general devastation; in the year 1014, after many partial and occasional defeats, their pride was more effectually humbled by Brian Boromhe or Boru, in the celebrated battle of Clontarf. Thenceforth the Northmen seem to have relinquished the hope of conquering the island, and those of them who remained at length applied themselves to the arts of peace and civilization. Of Doctor O'Connor's life and literary labours in the succeeding paper. E. J.

LINEs

Written on viewing a portrait (after Reynolds,) of the Right Hon. Edmond Burke, in possession of his Nephew, Thomas Haviland Burke, Esq.

BY JAMES PRIOR, ESQ.

Where genius dwelt, how keen we aim to trace
 Her glories beaming through the pictur'd face ;
 Search o'er each feature for the mind within,
 Strive, ere it start to life, the thought to win ;
 Fain to believe such outward signs there be
 Of powers whose force we feel and source would see ;
 An eye or brow approve, a forehead blame,
 Speak as if such, not soul, were stamp'd for fame,
 Think heaven's first gift, on few though doom'd to fall,
 Is, if not given to these, withheld from all.
 Yet can this art, by nature's laws confin'd,
 E'er to our view reveal unfathom'd mind ?
 Drag from its depths, as fishers do their prey,
 A struggling passion, as a victim they ?
 Embody truth, to science point our gaze ?
 Forth cause the burst of eloquence to blaze ?
 Give talents shape, or seize the flash of wit ?
 And on the canvas fix them as they flit ?
 So, Burke ! how vain the painter's work to scan
 For fires that warm'd, illum'd the living man !
 How vain to hope that colours shall impart
 The statesman's deep resolve, the speaker's art,
 The prescient view which taught and led the way,
 How ill to ward, and men o'er men to sway.
 The counsel giv'n so vainly, yet so well,
 How with Columbian kin our strife to quell.
 The skill to mark Gaul's wild and withering storm,
 Yet mar its aim to level, not reform.
 The tongue whose wit and wisdom senates knew,
 The pen whose truths through wondering Europe flew,
 Rous'd to defence the good, the bad disarm'd,
 And ev'n the cool to patriot ardour warm'd.
 The store of large philosophy disclose,
 Or fancy's tints, or genius' labouring throes.
 The gen'rous warmth depict, the anxious breast,
 Fir'd oft to wrath when shielding the oppress'd.
 The taste which depth with eloquence display'd,
 Virtues that shunn'd the glare, but lov'd the shade.
 Morals preserv'd midst many a public snare,
 A youth of study and an age of care.
 Bounty that gave a kind support and aim
 To humble merit till she grew to fame.
 The treasur'd lore, the heart with worth imbued,
 Fraught with all greatness, yet more fraught with good.
 How then shall art such varied gifts unfold ?—
 Such Reynolds' pen and lips, not pencil, told. J. P.